

Life of the Spirit

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COME, LORD JESUS!

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'COME, Lord Jesus!' is the earnest prayer in the closing words of the last book of our Holy Scriptures. This, the only prophetic book of the New Testament, tells of a Kingdom founded by the Lamb that was slain, withal a Kingdom still looking to and yearning for a greater perfectioning. We are the fortunate children of that Kingdom, privileged with the blessing of seeing the things that we see, and able in faith to cast our minds over the unfolding of God's plan through the ages, and so enabled to grasp something of the wonder of the Word-made-flesh and his dwelling amongst us. The Incarnation is the first and necessary step in God's redemptive plan. It prepared for and is a presage of a Second Coming which will mean a completion of God's plans and which will bring the world of men as well as the universality of creatures to the term which God has prepared for them. We who live 'last of all in these days' have our lives set between two poles. Everything, and the one thing necessary, in our lives, depends on the First Coming of our Lord, and is ordained unto a Second Coming. We can help ourselves, dispose ourselves better towards that Second Coming by reflection on the first and all that led up to it, or the long preparation of the Saviour's coming both in the course of world events and in the utterances of men of God who fulfilled God's purposes.

To help ourselves to see into God's purposes, let us take a great text of St Thomas¹ where he appears to step back to gaze at the large canvas of all God's accomplishments. He discerns three moments, that of creation, then re-creation by the redemptive Incarnation of our Lord, and finally, at

¹ Ia, 73, 1, 1um.

the end of time, the consummation or last aeon, when God will be 'all in all'. His way of setting out re-creation against creation is already suggested by the Prologue of St John which has as its background the opening verses of Genesis: 'in the beginning was the Word . . .' conjures up 'in the beginning God created . . .'. But we are concerned with more than verbal associations or resemblances. The first creation is in some sense *ordained to*, in some sense 'speaks of' the re-creation or coming on earth of the Saviour, who in turn furthers the advent of God's Kingdom by bringing nearer that consummation of all things. Such a way of contemplating reality brings out the supereminent dignity of the Word-made-flesh, for 'at the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those in heaven, on earth or under the earth, and every tongue confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father' (Philip. 2, 11). The pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus is in no way lessened because we hold that the Incarnation was 'for us men and for our salvation'; this last is very clearly the lesson of the Scriptures.

As we pass from a total view to elements in the historic fulfilment of God's purpose, let us specially note: 'the Lord [Yahweh] said to Abraham: leave your country, your kinsfolk and your father's house for the land which I will show you; I will make a great nation of you. I will bless them that bless you, and curse them that curse you. In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' (Gen. 12, 1-3.) This vocation-text opens that part of Israel's history which can be correlated with world events of the period, but (even more important) it is a key text for an essential understanding of the Old Testament. It is in the light of this text that we read all the subsequent history of the Chosen People.

They were a Chosen People because God chose, and God's choosing was shown in their significant history, in a Law that led to Christ (cf. Gal. 3, 24), and in a lasting charism of prophecy. Such was the greatness of God's favouring, despite countless human failings whose sorry tale fills so many pages of the Scriptures.

A further reading of Genesis emphasises the reality of God's choosing: 'I will establish my covenant between you and me, and your descendants after you throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant, that I may be a God to you and your descendants after you . . .' (cf. Gen. 17, 3-8). The memory of God's covenant lived on, so that the faithful in Israel grew progressively more conscious of their mission and responsibilities in the light of God's choosing: 'who is a God like to thee? . . . thou will send our sins down into the heart of the sea, thou wilt manifest thy good faith to Jacob and thy mercy to Abraham, as thou didst swear to our fathers from long time past' (Micheas 7, 18-20).

God's choosing, and Israel's mission, is manifested, first, in significant history. But, it might be said, all history is significant. It is. Over and above, and manifested to us by the light of faith, is a special God-given significance. The sacred history of the Chosen People is more particularly in the hands of God. Events that went to make up that history, and individual persons who figure in it can serve, under God, to convey yet another meaning beyond the immediately literal or literary sense of the human author. God's ordination of all is the basis or ground of these other, typical meanings. Types are wholly of the domain of faith. But we who do believe can look back confidently over the pages of Scripture, and by willing to remain in accord with the mind of the Church, can see how much in the Scripture points to the Lord Jesus and 'kindly Mother Church founded by the blood of Christ'. When reading the Scriptures thus we do but follow the usage of our Lord himself: 'as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that those who believe in him may not perish but may have life everlasting'. (John 3, 14-15.) St Paul too tells how 'Christ our pasch is sacrificed' (I Cor. 5, 7) and thus recalls the institution of the paschal lamb (Exodus 12). The children of Israel gathered manna in their desert wanderings, and we still sing '*panem de caelo praestitisti eis*', for the first giving of a food from heaven was a prefiguring of that gift of his Body and Blood in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. We might dwell for

long on the treasures of typology¹ in the Scriptures, for the whole Old Testament prefigures the New. Types and figures continue to play their part after the coming of our Lord. Thus the multiplication of loaves and the changing of water into wine prepares for the institution of the Blessed Sacrament; and the resurrection of Lazarus or of the widow's son is a type of his own resurrection.

Great figures too stand out as types of Christ, be they Josue, David, Jeremias, etc. Each individually falls short of the Prototype, but when taken all together they can show some or something of the qualities which were in him who was perfect God and perfect man.

God's choosing of this people is further shown in that Law which, as St Paul clearly saw, is but to lead to Christ (Gal. 3, 24). At the heart of the Law is the famous 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord [Yahweh] our God is One . . . thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, strength . . .' (Deut. 6, 49). This fundamental Law was to fashion a people of God for centuries, until he should come not to destroy but to reiterate the greatest command and call upon his disciples to prove that love by keeping his commandments. That this divine education over the centuries was effective is shown by the very critics of our Lord who acknowledged which was the first and greatest command. And many who left all to follow Christ had been schooled and prepared in the paths of the Old Law, sometimes even strictly so, as with St Paul the quondam pharisee.

Still more strikingly, God's choosing is shown in the specifically messianic prophecies conveyed through prophets, for the most part (though not always) men of God who fashioned, spiritualised, shepherded in good days and bad. That such a grace of prophecy should be among the Chosen People was itself prophesied in a famous text of Deuteronomy (18, 18): 'I will raise them up a prophet from among

¹ including types and figures which we would not suspect, were it not that God had told us. Thus I Peter 3, 20, tells of baptism being prefigured by the waters of the flood. Cf. the astonishing text of our liturgy: 'Moses saw the bush unconsumed: we see in this thy glorious ever-abiding virginity, O holy Mother of God'.

(Lauds antiphon, Feast of the Circumcision.)

their brethren like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.' The context (Deut. 18, 9-22) is a section of laws on the duty and authority of the prophet. The argument of the whole passage shows that the prophet is not so much an individual, but Moses's representative for the time being, whose office would be to supply guidance and advice whenever necessary. The context suggests rather a prophetic order than an individual prophet. The existence of such an institution and permanent channel of revelation (prefiguring the infallibility of the Church) was a mark distinguishing Israel from all other nations in antiquity. At the same time, this verse can be reasonably understood of an ideal prophet who should be 'like Moses' in a pre-eminent degree, one in whom the line of prophets should culminate, who himself should be supremely Prophet. The tradition of messianic interpretation can be traced back to Nathanael: 'He whom Moses wrote about in the Law . . . we have found, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth' (John 1, 45). Nathanael expresses his own and his contemporaries' beliefs.¹ It is appealed to by St Stephen (Acts 7, 37) and especially by St Peter: 'Jesus Christ, of whom God spoke by means of his holy prophets; for Moses said "The Lord your God shall raise up to you a prophet. . . ."' Subsequent Christian tradition firmly took up the text to show that Christ was Messias and Prophet.

As with types and figures, so too with individual messianic prophecies, the accumulative effect of the total can help to bring an unbeliever to faith, and can generate in the believer a profound wonder at all that has been effected by God in his moulding of history, in his choosing of a people, in his ceaseless pointing to his Divine Son who was to come, and who, our faith tells us, has come, and will come yet again. We look to that coming, and pray: 'Come, Lord Jesus!'

¹ that he should have Deuteronomy 18, 18 in mind (rather than Genesis 3, 15; 49, 15, Numbers 24, 17) is suggested by John 1, 21: '*Ho prophetes*', i.e. the prophet waited at the period.

CHRIST THE WORD

D. P. ARMSTRONG

IN an age of technical achievements and the mechanical repetition of words the unique Redemptive action of Christ THE WORD is particularly significant. Men are obliged in the exercise of free-will to choose Christ, who *is* the Word and brings the words of life, or Satan whose words are lies leading to death. Life eternal is the proper end of the whole man, but since the Fall he is open to temptation, and most of all to temptation through natural pride. Thus his especial tendency to pride is found in those activities which distinguish him from the other living creatures. His reason, a common object of idolatry, his humour—did not Bernard Shaw among other satirists take refuge from faith in a kind of pseudo-Godlike mockery?—his ability to use tools, whether useful or artistic or for pleasure, and above all his power to communicate the life of his soul through language, to other souls.

Language . . . words . . . the first overflow of the fullness of perfect Being in God is the Word: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him and without him was made nothing that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.’ There is a further significance attached to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity which is of special relevance: according to St Thomas, ‘the words of Genesis “In the beginning God created heaven and earth” are expounded in a three-fold sense. . . . “In the beginning” is expounded “In the Son”. For as the efficient principle is appropriated to the Father by reason of power, *so the exemplar principle is appropriated to the Son* by reason of wisdom, in order that, as it is said (Ps. 103, 24), “Thou hast made all things in wisdom”, it may be understood that God made all things *in the beginning . . . that is in the Son.*’ Thus according to this the Word is especially connected (i) with the creation of the universe, (ii) of man, (iii) of time, (iv) with the

exemplar principle, the whole conception of man in the image of God; and the Father and the Word have between them the Third Person, the Holy Spirit of Love.

Man is made in the image of God and he also has his *word*, or, one might say, his words and works; and in the case of men also—language is the chief and most glorious overflow of the abundant life he alone of earth's creatures possesses, the overflow of the life of his soul, the soul where sense and spirit meet and are united. Language is the inescapable witness to this unity between body and soul; the thought is spiritual, the words can be reduced to physical terms. Concepts expressed in abstract signs which convey them show the union of body and soul.

Our Lord himself emphasised the significance of language when he said 'Not that which goeth into a man defileth a man but that which cometh out of a man defileth a man'. The Church draws attention to the importance of words in the familiar prayer during the blessing of incense at Mass: (Ps. 140) 'Let my prayer, O Lord, be directed as incense in thy sight. . . . Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round my lips: That my heart incline not to evil words to make excuses in sins.'

There is a sense in which a man's whole being, his personal self-hood is somehow committed in the words he speaks or writes. It is a well-established idea that 'a man's word is his bond'. From many points of view one can see plainly that a man's word comes nearer than anything else that is his to lifting him from the world of the finite and corruptible 'into that of the divine and immutable'.

On earth the formal *Opus Dei*, or human-divine activity, is the regulated praise of God in words: it seems to be the nearest man on earth can get *actively* to his only real job, praising and loving God in heaven. Thus there seems to be after all more theological significance in the traditional picture of the Blessed in heaven playing harps and singing hymns round the throne of God, than it has become popular to think. One has only to imagine the Saints standing round passively while the praise came out of a wireless to get the full force of the idea! In the terms of this world to sing to God in 'words' is probably the highest way of praising

him. There is no space to discuss here the relative value of praise through other arts such as pure music, painting, etc.; hymns and the *Opus Dei* derive their special value from two facts: first that the words themselves came first from God, and secondly that words are more closely linked to the spiritual than the rest of creation, though that also came first from God. It must not be forgotten that God is to be glorified through Eternity by the praise of men, still creatures of body and spirit, but 'made new', and that this is the end of saving one's soul.

It has been suggested that because man is made in the image of God it is permissible to trace an analogy between Christ the Word, and the 'word' of man, understood firstly as physical signs of abstract and spiritual concepts, and more widely as including his works, all those activities which exist first according to some pattern in his mind and are then *incarnated*. (Some theories would include everything a man is or does in this category, and there is even some scientific ground for attributing physical diseases to spiritual evils inherited from the Fall, which would explain the words of our Lord to the man sick of the palsy.) It has also been suggested that in Eternity God will in some way be praised and glorified by the 'words' of glorified men, and that this activity can begin in this world; lastly, it was said that Satan attacks men through his pride in his highest activities—and this last idea may now be developed a little.

Apart from the effects of the active malice of the devil, man lives in a fallen and wounded state; his *natural tendency* is towards pride and self-worship, it is easier for him to be less than fully human than to keep to his proper end. In order to turn man from God the devil longs more than all to deflect his highest activities. Just as man's word—his vow.raises him towards a divine stability, so his word spoken flippantly, in bad faith, in deliberate ignorance, falsehood or self-deceit, lowers him not only towards the animals, but beneath them, for their voices were created to express only perfect physical experiences. Spoken and written words can betray the darkness of the soul they express: in a sense all speech of a serious kind (expressing more than mere physical sensation) is theological, as it expresses a state of

soul, a relationship between man and his maker. The relationship is often only implicit, but true words do express the spiritual life of a man and are therefore directly related to the one spiritual principle who created men from nothing: they show forth 'in a greater or lesser degree the *image* of God. They are the record of man acting in a very special sense *as man*: they can also be a most precious record of *God acting* on man, particularly in the 'inspired' writings of the Old Testament, and in the Gospels, of course, we have the human words of God made Man.

The recorded words of men during the course of history are a record of the lives of the souls of men; and if man, fallen from intercourse with his maker, and open to the tricks of malicious spiritual beings, had been left to himself the whole story would read as tragically as the most tragic parts already do. But the Word has always been here in the world to help him: 'Without him was made nothing that was made. . . . The light shined in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it'; this was the 'light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world'.

The Word which created the universe was a Word of overflowing life and love—a Word equal to God. Just as man's words express or commit his whole self, so the Word of God both is God and expresses God, commits God: in the whole universe only the Word of God truly is. In the Old Dispensation the Word spoke through the beauty of creation, and through the Prophets of the Chosen People. Finally through the Blessed Virgin Mary human flesh itself is caught up into the divine life and the Spirit of Love overshadows an immaculate human woman and the Word is made flesh. We then see clearly just how far God through his Word has committed himself—as far as to *become man*. Through Christ the Way, the Word made flesh, man becomes a partaker in the divine life *through his flesh*.

When it is said that creation is the 'work of God's hands' it is surely a human analogy based on the truth that the creative works of men are their 'Word made flesh'; (taking 'flesh' in the sense of 'matter'). The creative activities of man are human activities properly so-called; they are activities of the soul. If they are indeed such they should be

directed explicitly towards the glory of God. The effect of the Fall and of the influence of the devil in man's activities is always recognisable by a greater or less deviation from this love and praise of the divine Creator or at least his handiwork. The work of a man who loves God *more than anything else* (Matt. 22, 37 & 38) will deviate less than that of one who loves (i) other men, (ii) nature for itself, (iii) animals, (iv) himself, (v) power or any other creature better than or instead of God.

This condition is recognisable in various forms of art when technique becomes *more* important than content. A pagan who kisses a tree worships God in ignorance, he adores a work of God for he recognises a tree as something he could not himself create; if he bows down to the sun he acknowledges in his own way the 'glory of God' which the 'heavens declare'. But the man who draws, paints or models a tree or a sunrise not because he loves it but because he loves drawing, painting or modelling *for themselves* is an idolater: he worships either the tree or the sunrise in itself or his own cleverness in drawing, painting or modelling it. Such men are closed within the prison of the finite and corruptible; they really belong to Satan, they are walking in the dark towards death. For only through Christ the Word have men either light or life.

At the other end of the scale there is the extreme example of the aversion from the love and praise of God which is found in the thought of the atheist existentialist Sartre. According to his Catholic friend Gabriel Marcel (*The Philosophy of Existence*; London, Harvill Press), 'Sartre is condemned to freedom' and Sartre himself says that existence 'itself is unnecessary, redundant'; he is in agony to find himself alone with his own being. And here is the interesting point: this philosophy has a truly diabolical quality, its life is hate; so the reasoning of Sartre has led him to the truth: the truth of a world without a Spiritual Creator. This is also a fine example of how the pride of the devil leads to his exposure; there is nothing lovable or convincing about the picture of life which can be derived from the philosophy of Sartre, but 'it is a logically true one, given his starting point: no God. (Marcel his Christian friend

has a great admiration for the powers of his mind.) Nevertheless one is inclined to believe that comparatively few human beings could accept his account as totally true, and thus the very fineness of his reasoning will throw them back into the arms of God; for most men desire life and 'Sartre's doctrine is a doctrine of death' (Marcel).

The truth is that man has the power to condemn himself to death or to co-operate with the divine redemption which can raise him to his proper end, eternal life. God has visited his people and his saving power is available to men in many ways. The Christian is strengthened by the Sacraments of the Church bestowed by words and symbols, by the truth taught in the Church by words; the Creator descends upon his creatures and uses their means to communicate with them. He is moved by love and the creature must love in return; he must will to rise towards the Creator: he must correspond to the movement of love given him by the action of the Holy Spirit; the great wind and the glowing fire to kindle his heart. And just to show the abyss separating a purely spiritual God from his creatures of body and spirit, God shows the comparative 'nothingness' of our 'words' by communicating his Word in the silent emptiness of contemplative prayer. This is a gift mysterious beyond all others. Just as a bee's body transmutes the nectar it gathers from the flowers into honey, so the human soul has power, in a more mysterious way, to transmute the silent communications of God into words. The unimaginable force of the love of God for his creatures according to the mode of each Person of the Holy Trinity, awaits the free turning of man, made in the image of the Trinity, fit to receive him, to burst upon him in a torrent of grace.

Although the world has perhaps never appeared so obviously 'fallen' as it does today it is at the same time possible to hope that the means for the 'salvation of the nations' are also more clearly seen than in the past. The object of these notes is to direct attention upon one in particular: the dissemination of the spoken and the written word. This essentially human and spiritual activity has tremendous power today. The fact that printed bits of paper are able to give or to deprive men of food, clothes, nationality

or means of life, seems on reflection, like a bad joke of the devil's; but the power is there, a world-wide instrument for the redemptive action of Christ the Word.

If all men are to be drawn into unity with Christ, he must first be 'lifted up', through the lives, the words and works of Christians, whose words and works manifest Christ the Word because they receive their light and life from him. And the Christians themselves cannot be satisfied with half-measures; in their religious life they must not be satisfied to wander in by-ways and drink from little streamlets which happen to cross the path, they must return daily to the fountain itself, from which in five minutes they can receive as much living water as in weeks of small sips elsewhere. This fountainhead is the Bible and Liturgy of the Church; changing the metaphor, one might say that in them we find the receiving end of a heavenly broadcast. Those who turn aside from this unique source of communion with Christ the Word are doing the devil's work for him; in the day-by-day cycle of the Church's Liturgy we have the true, 'daily bread', the food of life fortified by the Sacramental body of Christ which reminds us each time we see or feel it of the Incarnation, the oneness in Christ of all creation, and the unity of man's body and soul.

Now, in this atomic age, when we realise more fully than in the past how the universe and the finite world we live in may be subdued to the will of man, now is the time to restore *all things* to Christ: every Christian needs to be nourished by Christ the word: in particular the creative artist, whether he works in words, stones, paint or music is restoring the creation to Christ, giving him back with love, what is his. Provided the artist is inspired by love of God may we not see in works of great beauty the unmistakable trace of the threefold image of God—Father, creator; Holy Spirit, inspiring force of love; and the Incarnate Word manifested by his creature? And thus through union of man with Christ 'All the works of the Lord bless the Lord: praise and exalt him for ever', in this world imperfectly and in Eternity perfectly.

WHY DID GOD THE SON BECOME MAN?

FROM ST THOMAS'S OPUSCULUM 'DE RATIONIBUS FIDEI'¹

PONDERING the mystery of God taking flesh, we ought to notice that everything which acts intelligently acts through an idea, a *verbum*, formed in its intellect. This we see in a builder or any craftsman producing an article according to the plan which his mind has conceived. Now because the Son of God is the divine *Verbum*, it follows that God has made everything through the Son. Further, the maker of anything is the one to repair it; if a house falls down the architect who built it should be consulted.

Amongst the creatures created by God through his Word, rational beings hold pride of place since all else seem to be arranged for their service. This is understandable because rational beings have control of their actions through their freedom of choice, whereas the others are motivated by the force of nature and not by deliberate judgment. The enslaved are everywhere at the service of the free and are governed by them. By the 'fall' of rational creatures I do not mean any lessening of their existence, but a failure in the right ordering of the will. Failure is specially bound up with that through which anything works. We say a craftsman fails if he lacks some part of his art; or a natural thing is useless if the source of its strength is corrupted, as when a plant can no longer produce seed when the earth is sterile.

Rational creatures act through the power of will and there, too, lies their freedom of choice. Misdirection of the will constitutes failure for these and this is the result of sin. The primary agent in the removal of this shortcoming, which is nothing less than a perversion of the will, must be God, and this through his Word by whom he created all things.

There can be no remedy for the sin of the angels since they are, by nature, unchangeable and cannot turn from that

¹ Translated by Hugh Nash, O.P.

to which they have once committed themselves. Men, however, by their very make-up, have changeable wills; they can not only choose the good or the evil but can revoke a decision in favour of one or the other. This convertibility of the will lasts so long as the soul is joined to the body, forever undergoing change. Once separated from the body the soul obtains that fixity of will proper to the angels. After death, then, the soul can have no second thoughts, nor can it turn from good to evil or the other way about.

It lay, then, with the goodness of God to restore this fallen human nature through his Son. The method of healing ought to correspond both to the sickened nature and to the disease. As regards the first, since man is rational, gifted with freedom, he ought not to be recalled to righteousness by coercion but through his power of choice. As for the disease, a perversion of the will, it needed curing through a realignment of the will. Our wills are properly directed when we love aright, which means loving God above all else as the highest good, and everything else as leading towards him, our last end. There should be, too, an order of importance observed in our love of these lesser things—the spiritual should be preferred to the corporeal.

Nothing could so provoke us to love God than that his very Word, through whom all things were made, should assume our nature, for its healing, and be himself both God and man. We have, in this fact, the greatest sign of his love for us, and to know oneself to be loved strongly urges to love in return. Moreover, man's mind and affections are tied to material things; he does not easily rise above them. Yet anyone can know and love another man. To meditate upon the sublimity of God and be borne to him by a worthy love is for those only who by divine help and long and laborious effort are lifted from the corporeal to the things of the spirit. But, that he might provide a way to himself for all, God wished to become man, so that even the lowly could know and love him as one like themselves. Thus, through that which they could grasp, they might gradually advance towards perfection.

Again, because God has become man we have the hope of obtaining a share in that perfect happiness which belongs

by right to him alone. Man knows his limitations. If someone had promised the happiness of knowing and joyfully experiencing God for which the angels even are scarcely fitted, he would hardly have dared hope for it, unless he had been shown the worth of human nature, which God so highly prized that he became man to redeem it. So it is, through his taking flesh, God has given us the hope that even we may reach union with him in blessed happiness.

Knowing now the value of his nature, which God has seen fit to assume, man ought not to subject his heart to any creature: neither through idolatrous worship nor by submitting himself exclusively to material things. How unworthy it is that man, so lofty in God's estimation and so close to him that he willed to become one, should blindly enslave himself to things less than God.



ON BECOMING ONE

BR DOMINIC, T.O.S.D.

WE know exactly as much as we have suffered; neither more, nor less. If it were not possible to suffer with, and even for other people, what follows would not follow, since it is these to whom it is addressed who are suffering directly. But if these lines contain any value it is only in so far as the writer has been able to suffer with, and for, those suffering directly, who are in need of sympathy and comfort. Should they, in fact, be born of illusion and shallow sentiment they are worthless and will fail to stir any deep longings, in which case may they at least do no harm.

I can scarcely have been the first Christian who has stood beside the entrance to a tube station in the heart of London during the evening rush-hour and been moved in spirit at the sight of all these people careering along, each of them with an eternal destiny, each of them at every moment of

time making the choice of heaven or hell, business-men, shop-girls, students and office-boys, the aged, the infirm, and those in the strength of their young bodies. What mystery there lies in such moments: the calls of the barrow-boys and the quick passing of a half-remembered face.

How should a Christian react to such a scene? Not, one trusts, by naming it 'the world', by letting the shutter of one's judgment fall down over one's eyes, leaving 'the world' to darkness and perdition, taking it upon oneself to pronounce the *anathema sit*. Nor should there arise even the faintest inclination to stand up before these crowds on a soap-box and start preaching to them, whether by demanding to know if they are saved or giving them doses of Papal Encyclicals. Tub-thumping may have its place, but not here. In the presence of crowds our Saviour's impulse seems always to have been the same: he had compassion on the multitude. Compassion at the beginning of life, compassion to the end of our days; without such compassion our oneness in Christ becomes marred by a lie running across it. Amongst the multitude which daily circles around the centre of this vast emptiness, one group in particular calls for our compassion.

These are they who at first sight seem in no need of it. Self-assured, smartly-dressed, knowing where nylons are to be had, they thread their way through the streets with all the confidence of long practice, and when they speak, their voices are metallic, like the click of their high heels on the hard pavements, like the mechanical winking of neon lights. 'Self-sufficient': that is the term for 'the modern miss'. But it is only a half-term, expressing only a half-truth, and the rush-hour does not last all day. The self-sufficiency so often cloaks a hidden misery. In the evening they eat the dry bread of loneliness in rooms where they are homeless, where the only voices are the hard voices of strangers brought by the radio from a distant world. As the night draws in they pull on the curtains and sit down waiting. Waiting for what? They do not know. For years they have sat there, waiting, and they will go on doing so until they realise there is nothing to wait for. And just as in former times they had turned into their narrow beds, gazed at the ceiling and

listened to the dripping water in the landlady's bathroom, so now, in the moment when they realise that they have waited in vain, they turn their faces to the wall. Perhaps they are not buried immediately, but they are already dead. Another human being has come to an end.

These are they who were meant to be mothers, whose whole being is one longing to be a mother, to give birth to children. For that end their bodies were formed, shaped in nerve and limb by the Creator so that they might be mothers, their ears to listen for the cry of children, their hands to caress them and their breasts to nourish them. Their souls also were shaped for the same purpose, since the soul is the form of the body, the body-in-act. Yet they go down to the grave without giving birth to another human creature; they are barren women.

I am not the first Christian who has been moved by this apparent frustration of God's work in creation, and the seeming waste—even cruelty—of it all. 'It's not natural. Maybe men were meant to have more than one wife', the person speaking brought out all his sincerity with his deep Northern accent. Easy to refute as his theology may have been, it would have been impertinent to give a quick answer to this undogmatic soul who simply went about doing good. A more considered response was given during Hitlerite days in Germany when the soul-destroying myths of National Socialism caused single women to bow their heads in shame because no young man had looked with favour upon them. The effect of the ostracism which they endured did not end with Hitler; bruised hearts are not so easily mended, and the habit of looking down on single women does not easily die. Fortunately courageous women were not lacking who took their sisters' shame to their own hearts and poured out consolation from the deep sources of Christian sympathy. Gertrud von le Fort, Edith Stein, Ida Görres and many others, fought to save their sisters from despair, and their effort cannot have been fruitless. At the same time, no one of those whom I know has given the direct answer to the needs of barren women in the modern world, the only answer which is ultimately of any consolation to those who were created to be mothers and are childless. It is the

answer which is wrung from you as you watch the multitude; there is no consolation for someone who *is* not what they are meant to be; one can only hope to show them that they *can* be what they are meant to be, that they *are* truly mothers.

How can a virgin be a mother? Is this not just the cue for another escape from reality into some kind of flight of metaphorical fancy? If the modern mind in its conceited toughness reacts to the question in that way, it is because modern men have hardened their hearts and are stiff-necked like the children of Israel. When the Psalmist spoke of how the Lord would make the barren woman the joyful mother of many, the children of Israel understood it to mean that the Lord could bless Sarah, Rachel or Anna with children of their wombs, even when men would have deemed it impossible. For them the Lord's promises were to be realised according to a fleshly mode, and any other mode they would have regarded as metaphorical. But the very first moment of the new dispensation saw the fulfilment of the Lord's promise through the Psalmist in a new and wonderful way. The new creation begins with the Virgin-Mother who is Mother and Queen of all creation. She is *really* a Virgin and *really* a Mother, not just metaphorically. To how many is she Mother? No one could count them; her children are as the stars in heaven or the sand on the seashore. All of us in the new creation stand at her feet and look to her as our most gentle Queen and Mother. She is Virgin-Mother, and henceforth all virgins through her can be mothers in the new creation, just as all mothers can pass through her motherhood into a deeper, surer virginity. She is the model for both virgins and mothers who is herself perfect Virgin and perfect Mother, the wedding of Motherhood and Virginity.

Holy people could, no doubt, draw unfailing nourishment from exegesis of the title 'Virgin-Mother'; to them I leave the task, but in case the above interpretation should seem 'spiritual' to the degree of 'metaphorical' one need only look at parts of the Gospels to see that any other interpretation fails to do them justice. When the woman says to our Lord, 'Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breasts that gave thee suck', and our Lord replies, 'Yea,

rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it!', no one can reasonably suppose that our Lord is excluding our Lady from this blessedness—he is including in her blessedness all who hear the word of God and keep it. He is telling us that she is at the height of blessedness because she most faithfully heard and kept the word of God. And by his words he is still trying to soften the Israelite heart which would have seen in fleshly motherhood the height of blessedness. How ultimately linked blessedness is with this motherhood in the new creation comes out just as strikingly in the incident when our Lord is speaking to the multitudes. Someone tells him that his mother and his brethren are outside. In his reply our Lord says, 'Whoever shall do the will of my Father, that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother'—once more, motherhood is a result of doing the will of the Father, and it is *real* motherhood that is the reward of doing the Father's will, a motherhood that shall never be taken away. They are truly mothers who are truly virgins, whose souls are intact, wholly ready to give birth to the Word, perfectly receiving the message of the Father.¹

If we look again to the Gospels for the source of motherhood, the final moments before the death of our Lord on the cross provide us with a theme for meditation to which one could never weary of returning. But the truths to be seen in these moments when God said to his Mother, '*Mulier, ecce filius tuus*', and to his beloved disciple, '*Fili, ecce mater tua*', though they are meant for all of us, can be expressed by few. But though we are unable to formulate the deep convictions which stir in us whilst we meditate upon those moments, it is worthwhile, as a substitute for our own silence, to refer to a passage from a modern work which admirably illustrates the eternal application of these

¹ This statement is thoroughly intelligible so long as we remember Kierkegaard's profound remark that every human being is feminine in his relations with God. What Kierkegaard had in mind was the inability of finite man to make any movement, of his own initiative, towards God, who is Infinite. Man does not *grasp* God; man *receives* God, man is passive towards God, man says, 'Be it done unto me according to thy word'—man is feminine towards God.

meditations upon Motherhood in the Gospels.

In C. S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce*, the author and George McDonald, his guide to the realm of Spirits, meet a procession of Spirits, at the end of which comes a lady in whose honour the other Spirits are dancing and scattering flowers . . . 'only partly do I remember the unbearable beauty of her face.

"‘Is it? . . . is it?’ I whispered to my guide.

“‘Not at all’, said he. “‘It’s someone ye’ll never have heard of. Her name on earth was Sarah Smith and she lived at Golders Green. . . .’”

“‘And who are all these young men and women on each side?’”

“‘They are her sons and daughters.’”

“‘She must have had a very large family, Sir.’”

“‘Every young man or boy that met her became her son—even if it was only the boy who brought the meat to her door. Every girl that met her was her daughter.’”

“‘Isn’t that a bit hard on their own parents?’”

“‘No. There *are* those that steal other people’s children. But her motherhood was of a different kind. Those on whom it fell went back to their natural parents loving them more. Few men looked at her without becoming, in a certain fashion, her lovers. But it was the kind of love that made them not less true, but truer, to their own wives.’”

How admirably the author of those lines has illustrated the true teaching of Motherhood, and summed up for us both the intimacy which a Christian woman should feel for all creation if she is to be a true mother, and the attitude of reverence which should be inspired in us whenever we see Sarah Smith getting into the underground for Golders Green. If there is any truth in what we have been saying so far the direct answer to the cries of the barren woman in the twentieth century is there; and it is a joy for those of us who are convinced that the mental anguish they go through is often pleasing to Satan rather than an offering to God simply to go about trying to relieve that anguish. The Gospel teaching on motherhood does not provide a narcotic but salvation, saving us from the narrow dusty rooms in which Satan would like to confine us and opening our hearts to

the needs of the multitude, to the orphans, the widows and the fatherless.¹ The sight of London tube stations need no longer drive us almost to despair; every thing and every person in God's creation can be as they are meant to be. They are not, it is true, but that does not breed despair so long as our compassion deepens; since despair is the sin against hope, and compassion is the mingling of hope and suffering. Let us hope exuberantly.

Perhaps the implications in this view of motherhood may be summarised by saying that it shows spiritual relationships to be superior to fleshly relationships, superior in the sense of more enduring. Nor does this contradict anything which we learn from the Gospel where our Lord tells us how in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven we have to be prepared to break all fleshly ties, and how there is neither marrying nor taking wives in the resurrection. Furthermore it is in accordance with the obvious fact that whilst those who are united in Christ (even though they have no fleshly bond between them) can never be divided, fleshly ties cannot guarantee endurance. In other words, it is possible (if the word means anything) for one human being to be in hell (which God forbid) whilst someone with whom they have fleshly ties is in heaven. Water is thicker than blood if it is the water of baptism.

This superiority of spiritual relationships can be given a much wider application in order to comfort others in the same way as the true doctrine of motherhood might help barren women. But before suggesting such applications one caution needs to be made, which is that fleshly relationships are not to be disparaged. Any attempt to seek in spiritual relationships the treasures which are meant to be found in those of the flesh could only result in disaster; there would in that case be neither true fleshly relationships nor true spiritual relationships but only an all-pervading selfishness which allows for no true relationships at all. The normal development of spiritual life is through the bodily condition

¹ It seems reasonable to suppose that visits to the widows, the orphans and the fatherless should not be made solely to satisfy their material needs—plenty of widows are rich, in any case—but in order to stand in the places of those who are dead or missing.

to which we are committed, and through the duties which go with it.

But, the caution once made here in brief are some of the suggested applications. They are intended as a guide towards deepening our life in Christ, to enable us to see the play of Christ in every limb and member. No more than the fumblings of a tyro they may persuade the experts to present us with a surer guide.

What, in the first place, of the two types of women not already considered, who are nuns, and mothers of families? Is it not true that the nun's vocation is primarily a call to share in the Motherhood of the Church, through being mothers with Mary, the mother of us all? Surely we should see this more plainly if our traditional spirituality had not almost come to ignore the truth that God is our Mother. When we accept this wonderful formulation of our relationship to God we are accorded a vision of the divine motherhood flowing through Mary, the Church, and all those who share in Mary's vocation. All may share this vocation, it is true, whether male or female, for St Paul was doing so when he brought the word of God to birth in those to whom he preached; they did, indeed, become his children, as all of us are children of Mary who carried the word to us. Nevertheless, there is a special sense in which the virginity of nuns is for the sake of motherhood, and in which they are made like to the Virgin Mary. Nuns are mothers indeed. Perhaps the glorious nature of their vocation has not always been brought out through failure to insist on this truth. How otherwise can one explain the atmosphere of distrust which sometimes arises between teaching orders and their pupils? It may be because the pupils do not recognise that the nuns are truly their mothers; sometimes it may happen that the nuns forget how truly the pupils are their children in Christ. Yet these consecrated virgins have already received a promise that they will be rewarded a hundredfold for what they have given up on earth, and we know that at the end of time when all things are made plain they will be revealed as the mothers of many. We shall realise how, during all the years of their life in religion, they were bringing souls to birth in Christ. Does it not follow that what will come to

glorious light in heaven must on earth be cherished, though in the hiddenness of faith? A nun is truly the mother of many; may the fact be a constant joy to her.

To write about mothers with families with any assurance presents innumerable complications, and it will have to be sufficient to repeat what has already been said: through Mary the mother of a family deepens her virginity. Of course, the sentence is meaningless if, by 'virginity', we simply refer to the state of a body. However, if that is all that we mean by 'virginity' the whole discussion is reduced to the level of biology or biography. But in its truest sense, virginity is a perfection of the soul which is achieved in a greater or a lesser degree according to the striving for perfection in the person concerned. Common observance should be enough to prove that many women who are physically virgins betray the utmost promiscuity in the rest of their behaviour; it would be deplorable if nuns were to be promiscuous in this way by poking their noses into other people's affairs, but the same bad habits, in the form of gossip, do equal harm to women in the world. Such promiscuity can only be killed when it is cut off at its root in the soul's first movements; unless it is cut off at the root there can be no permanent remedy, and the degree of virginity must necessarily be slight. Under normal conditions this uprooting is more easily performed by a Carmelite than by someone running a household, but there is no absolute obstacle to prevent the mother from doing it successfully. The more perfect a mother, the deeper her achievement of virginity. The Virgin-Mother is the mediatrix of *all* graces.

As happens all too often in outlines of spirituality the discussion so far has ignored a third of the world's population, the men. Could it not be maintained that men also are called to be fathers, and that their vocation may equally be realised in three states: as fathers of families; as consecrated fathers (i.e. priests); and as bachelors (who can realise their fatherhood in countless ways)? Once more it all depends upon the initial vision of God as Father dispensing light, and of others being brought into the relationship of fatherhood so as to perform the office of dispensing light and food. God is our Father as well as our Mother, and all who have

the vocation of fatherhood are called to do his will. How deep this relationship thrusts into the being of the world is demonstrated by St Thomas (commenting upon St Paul) when he says that this relationship of paternity continues to exist in heaven. He goes on to point out how the different ranks of angels function after a paternal fashion, dispensing the light from the Father of lights. Looking first at the office exercised by the father of a family one scarcely knows where to outline the orientation of soul appropriate to his state. One cannot easily discover any writings intended to guide the father, although endless pamphlets are available on the duties of motherhood. This is a gap in our spiritual literature urgently in need of being filled. Actually much may be learned from studying what St Benedict has to say in his Chapter on The Office of Father (i.e. the Office of Abbot, the words meaning the same, as we remember when reading St Paul's phrase, 'whereby we cry Abba, Father') for St Benedict himself has rightly been given the title, 'Father of the West'. But a tyro should not take it upon himself to comment on the Rule, and for the moment we limit ourselves to indicating how the father of the family should regard his office.

Clearly his family will never be able to attach the meaning they should to the title of 'Father' as applied to God until they have had some experience of what a good father does for his children. In this sense a human father has the awful responsibility of standing in the place of God our Father, and, in a measure, has to care for the welfare of his children, as God cares for us, who has numbered the hairs of our head. God is our Father; everything which he allows to happen to us his children is Providential; similarly the human father must provide for his children, planning for them with all the prudence he can muster, for prudence is the virtue analogous to Providence. The office he occupies, then, is not a spectacular one—even a Catholic Film Society would have difficulty in filming the story of someone whose outstanding virtue was prudence—and a good father, like St Joseph, must almost inevitably be hidden, working in the background, reserved in speech but mighty in his works.

No more spectacular is the main task he must perform,

the one in which his fatherhood is most like to God's actions: he must give his children bread, bread to nourish their God-given bodies. Again the job never attracts many of the Romantics, because it is so humble, so of the earth, earthly. What the Romantics fail to realise, and this accounts for their ultimate frivolousness, is that one can only come to the Lord from heaven through acceptance of our earthliness; earthliness is not the end, but it is the beginning, an essential beginning for any human end. There is a deep continuity between ministering the bread of earth and the bread of heaven; humans must eat the bread of earth if they are to eat the bread of heaven; both are gifts from the Father, and in administering earthly bread the human father is preparing his children for heaven. Here on earth we cannot receive the light from the Father of lights in all its nakedness, which is why it has to be given to us in the form of bread, of something we eat.

We must pause if we are to see into some of the depths of this mystery. Light is given as bread. Why? Because in heaven the very sight of God means perfect possession of God; no rift whatsoever lies between seeing and perfect possession; therefore in seeing we shall receive light perfectly. On earth we are only capable of perfect possession in one mode, which is the mode of eating—we make ours what goes in through our mouths. There is a gap on earth between seeing and perfect possession, between seeing and eating. (How many of our emotions are explained by this fact. We *hunger* for beauty; we desire to possess beauty completely on earth, and we cannot do so; but this very longing to eat what we see as beautiful is itself a token that we shall come in the end to perfect possession.) But God does not leave us hungry, nevertheless; he gives us the Light of the World in the one mode in which we are capable of receiving perfectly, the mode of eating—he gives us bread. One surely need not be a 'mystic' in order to see this continuity between bread and Bread, or to appreciate the office performed by the father of a family in dispensing light in bread. He is, in fact, performing a priestly office in respect of his family. No other word so aptly sums up what we have been saying about the fatherly office as this—he is, indeed, a priest.

The pattern of developing spiritual relationships should now be sufficiently discernible for us simply to allow the role of the consecrated priest to manifest itself. Just as the consecrated virgin shares in the motherhood of women with families, and herself shares her virginity with them, just as they are bound together by the tender knot of sisterly love, similarly the consecrated priest is paternally bound to the fathers of families; with them he shares his priesthood, and with them their fatherhood. Reverting, as always, to practical applications, how wonderful when a layman addresses a priest as 'Father', and that single word is used with such meaning that it becomes a prayer! 'Father': the very sound of it in the English tongue sends up a chorus of praise to God, the Father, especially when it comes from the lips of a gnarled old layman who has nursed his children's children and it is addressed to some shy young priest fresh from the seminary. Again, the word should not be used metaphorically since it is at the hands of the priest that we receive our daily Bread; every priest whom we meet is related to us in fatherhood and we are his children, the first fruits of the hundredfold reward given to the consecrated. The priest is, indeed, a father.

The third state of fatherhood contains all who are bachelors and whose office is by this time obvious enough. They share in dispensing light from the Father of lights. Even apart from the peculiar vision in which we have tried to display it, the status of bachelor must have struck many as a means of fatherhood when they remembered their school teachers and their university tutors—or, in the case of working lads, when they remembered craftsmen who nursed them in their trades. Light, however, seems somewhat insubstantial to man *in via*, and so many would be inclined to expect that a bachelor who transmits something so intangible has merely been brought into the pattern in order to complete it. Such suspicions would never shake the present writer's convictions, however, if only on account of several incidents which he recently observed. On each of the occasions in question a layman absent-mindedly addressed as 'father' had been helping the other layman in what was fundamentally a spiritual conflict, and the absent-minded use

of the word 'father' gave unconscious testimony to the relationship which had been established. One had been dispensing to the other light from the Father of lights, a function which all bachelors can perform whatever their occupation, whether social workers, school-teachers, craftsmen, foremen or politicians. The bachelor, also, is called to fatherhood.

Probably none of the above thoughts are at all original; they will have occurred to many who fulfil the functions we have been discussing. On the other hand, they are not often brought together, even in this sketchy form. And even now they need to be brought into a coherent whole by reference to two other insights, the first insight concerning the male-female principles within each human person and the second concerning the bearing of all this on our longing to become one for ever in heaven.

From the witness of the poets one was familiar with the notion that each human person embodied a male and a female principle even before Jung found it such a fruitful hypothesis in his psycho-analysis. *Animus* and *anima* fructify each other in the human person; both have their function in a healthy soul. Perhaps it has not always been noticed that both these principles are mentioned in the account of the Creation. 'God created *man* in his image . . . male and female created he them'—that might very well mean each human person is both male and female. This interpretation not only accords with the intuitions of the poets, the exigencies of Jungian experiments and modern theories on the balance of hormones, but it shows us clearly how each human being is made in the image of God, our Father, who is also God our Mother. It has the further advantage of showing that the fact of being male and female does not, as it were, record an accident which will be remedied in heaven (where there is neither male nor female—taking the words severally); the inherence of male and a female principle within each one of us is a positive gift whose richness we shall appreciate in heaven, where both these principles will be given full play. There will be neither male or female only in the sense that that the limitations of sex will be abolished in order to bring the male and female principles into perfect harmony. Nothing of the richness will be lost, and the harmony will

be such as to make it impossible to tell whether the richness comes from male or female, and the distinction need never arise.

Since each human person acts as male and female in different respects, each human person may enter into every one of the relationships discussed above, according to the persons with whom they are brought into contact. For instance, a Dominican reviewer some time ago spoke of the way in which Miss Caryll Houselander, through her writings, became a mother to her readers; his intuition harmonised with the experience of others, and one learnt how an unmarried woman could become a mother—even, one imagines, a mother to archbishops. Readers of another Catholic authority have sensed the growth of a father-relationship between writer and reader. Many school-children, furthermore, not only receive light from their masters, who are thereby fathers, but they often receive from them a warmth and tenderness which their homes do not afford—and to them their masters stand in the mother-relationship. There is no end to the richness of human relationships so long as they are ordered to the will of the Father.

That is the final point, the ordering of these relationships so as to avoid promiscuity. Is there not a danger of being led astray if one is thinking continually about them? Certainly there is; but the danger is slight if one sees them in perspective and stops thinking about them continually. One can be a brother or a father without even being aware of it, but it often helps to know exactly what one is doing; blind performance of a function may be efficient, but to make it conscious and responsible renders it truly human, and those who accept their brotherhood and sisterhood grow daily in compassion and humanity. The actual ordering of one's behaviour towards sisters and brothers, children and fathers, presents few difficulties if one ignores the complications, seeing it all in a simple everyday image, the image of light flowing through a prism. Light is invisible, but is broken into visibility by the prism which unfolds the richness and variety of colours contained by the invisible. The range of colours within the spectrum corresponds to the range, variety and beauty of human relationships which are displayed

when the love of God is broken upon the jagged edges of this world and we become our Lord's mother, brother, sister. The movement of our own lives should be to follow multi-coloured relationships back to their source, never fearing lest we should lose any of their richness in the pure light of God for he allows nothing to be lost. Sometimes the movement seems too slow and we try of our own initiative to bring the colours into one—as in that cry of longing, *Soror mea sponsa*—or in St Teresa's 'Yo muero porque no muero'; but always God is drawing us into the one light where all longings are fulfilled, the source of all happiness. It is towards that source that all those one meets in the rush-hour are hurrying, lonely women and busy men, students and spivs, for tube stations full of folk will also join in the chorus of thanksgiving and victory, 'Thus was it well, and thus was it well'.



THE STRUCTURE OF RELIGIOUS CHASTITY

Oswin Magrath, O.P.

ACERTAIN obscurity seems to surround the idea of religious chastity (manifest even in the various names given to it, chastity, perfect continence, purity, virginity), and there is a tendency to envisage it in a negative manner, as chiefly the exclusion of sex and marriage. On the other hand, many recent studies have emphasised the positive richness of the idea and the many elements involved in it. It may therefore not be out of place to try to give a synthetic view of the whole. Basically it is a special kind of temperance called chastity, balanced between lust and insensibility, and supported by the sense of shame and modesty, and by the attraction of a spiritual beauty. Its specific difference as religious chastity comes

from a vow, which belongs to the virtue of religion; while charity, both towards God and the neighbour, is its end.

TEMPERANCE AND CHASTITY

Although rising above ordinary human virtue, religious chastity presupposes the normal virtues which deal with its matter, temperance, and the special kind called chastity. Temperance is the moderation of desire, pleasure and sadness arising from the powerful animal passions which seek food and sexual pleasure, and which are ordained to the animal life of man. Hence the measure in all forms of temperance, the right use of its matter, is what is useful for a person's life. And this will vary with the aims for which the person is living. Chastity means perfect control of the powerful sexual appetite precisely in relation to the needs of a person's life. For the unmarried individual, the married, or the religious celibate, whose lives are dominated by different aims, chastity will dictate quite a different use of, or even abstinence from, sexual pleasure, determined by the purpose of the life of each. For the unmarried, temporary but purposeful abstinence; for the married, control and direction; for the religious, perpetual abstinence. But in each chastity is the appropriate degree of control, and if it is perfect virtue it will always include the ability to control when and as far as necessary. Hence in itself it is a positive attitude to sex: to use it when it is useful for the purpose for which it is intended. Only secondarily is it negative: not to use it when it is not useful.

Hence chastity supposes a right appreciation of the nature of sexual activity and a respect for its right use. It means a valuing of the purposes of marriage. Chastity appreciates the close co-operation with God's creative activity involved in the use of sex; it sees that its purpose is the good of the race and the building up of God's family, and that it must not be diverted to individual selfishness; it perceives how in it body and soul meet in an altogether unique unity, and how in every manifestation the whole personality is engaged; it sees that here the animal cannot be separated from the spiritual as in eating and drinking, and that in sex man must give himself wholly, so that its misuse is peculiarly

degrading. Chastity also appreciates the close connection between sex and spiritual love: how the very act which aims at procreation at the same time realises the greatest possible unity between human beings, is the fullest gift of one person to another and the greatest extreme from selfishness. So that it will refuse to use sex where full and proper giving is excluded. Lastly chastity sees in marriage the sacramental sight of Christ's gift of himself to the Church on the Cross through which the family of God is born, and that the use of sex is, for the Christian, inseparable from participation in Christ's sacrifice. Hence chastity tends to restrict and even abstain from the use of its matter, sex, out of reverence for its importance, its holiness and its value to God, our neighbour and ourselves. It deals with a sacred and mysterious region of human life, and in this sense can well be called the holy virtue.

It is therefore most important that those vowed to perpetual chastity as religious should possess the virtue of chastity in its proper sense, and not a mere negative form of it. This is especially true for those who have to educate others. The vow should clear the mind and will for a more perfect understanding of married life and greater respect for it than is usually possible for the married, and hence make religious the ideal educators of those called to marriage.

LUST AND INSENSIBILITY

Like all virtues chastity is a balance between extremes: lust, or over-indulgence in sex, and insensibility, or lack of proper appreciation of its goodness.

Lust is the misuse of sexual pleasure: the opposite of all that has been said about chastity. It means a lack of respect for the creative activity of God involved; a perversion of a power given for the good of the race to the selfishness of the individual; a trivial use of a force which involves and degrades the depths of the personality; a giving to another which is false, not a real giving but a selfish taking, or not a permanent and total giving, as sex of its nature implies; a perversion of love; a subjection of the whole person to the animal in man in a way not found in any other sin. The sacred and ennobling domain of sex becomes degrading

to the whole character; the mind becomes blind and disordered and can no longer judge clearly, but is hasty, thoughtless and changeable; the will becomes dominated by self-love, and flees from spiritual things and God, the realm of sex becomes a seductive evil that corrupts the whole man.

This degrading effect of lust is true of all voluntary misuse of sex. While it is possible to perform a slight unkind action without involving the general will to be kind, it is not possible to will fully the slightest impure activity without willing to set in motion the whole sexual function with all its implications. The whole machinery of love, including the will itself, is involved. But when sexual excitement is not voluntary, although of itself it attempts to link up with the love of the will and so involve the person, it cannot do so without the consent of the will. It is thus important to watch the direction of the will in temptations against purity, since the will to lust transforms the physical and emotional disturbance into personal degradation. It is also important to realise that, so long as the will is aiming at a proper end, incidental sexual disturbance can be disregarded, so long as there is no real risk of the direction of the will being perverted by it. Again, the will is not fully involved when such sexual disturbance, though unjustified, is not fully accepted, but only allowed through a certain negligence or imprudence, without real consent to lust; and such can be venial sin.

Lust can also manifest itself obscurely in a love of excitement or of self-importance; in an obscure attraction, often joined to repulsion, for sexual matters; in prudishness and a proud purity. Although these are not sinful in a directly lustful sense, they impair perfect chastity, which has a clear appreciation of the good and bad in sex and is free in its regard, neither slave to it nor afraid of it. It is a clear, pure and radiant virtue, which does not merely hide away the attraction to sex where it will seek satisfaction in other ways, but overcomes and transcends it. There can also be indulgence of sexual appetite in minor ways not obviously such, as in a selfish or emotional love of others and of children or in many kinds of sights and thoughts. It is necessary to

purify all these obscure and indirect things in order to be really free from lust, for in all of them the same selfish indulgence of a deep and holy function is in some way involved, and the clarity of chastity is sullied.

The opposite extreme to lust is insensibility. There is a temperamental insensibility, an absence of appeal from sex or a sluggishness and laziness. This is not chastity, which is a positive attitude to sex, and which will overcome such a temperament if need be; and it is not even a disposition to chastity, being really an obstacle to acquiring the virtue. The dispositive temperament which aids chastity is, on the contrary, a sensitiveness and delicacy of feeling: the absence not of sensibility, but of gross and violent passions. Chastity will tend to develop such a temperament where it does not exist. The vice of insensibility is more than mere temperament; it is the positive acceptance of an attitude of insensibility to sex, where the whole realm of sex is not properly valued, or the person is too lazy or selfish to respond to it and deliberately avoids it. The voluntarily chaste must reject the vice of insensibility, and not confuse chastity with a sluggish temperament, but realise that it must be accompanied by a delicate and sensitive behaviour. This implies a complete victory over lust.

SHAME AND MODESTY

Chastity is aided by certain dispositions or external aids, one of the chief of which is the sense of shame. This is a passion or feeling, not a virtue; it is fear of opprobrium. In a state, such as that before the Fall, where there was perfect virtue and perfect subjection of the passions to the will, there was no shame. In relation to chastity shame is a rich passion: it fears the uncontrolled and animal character of sex and its tendency to reduce man to the sub-human even when used rightly; it fears sin and all the sin associated with sex in human life; it fears to expose such a personal and central emotion to others; it fears to profane that which is in close relation with God. Hence shame is a compound of fear of evil, and of reverence for good with fear of its misuse. It is an instinctive reaction to whatever threatens to cause either in ourselves or in others an uncontrolled

activity of the sexual instinct. Hence it is a relative thing, varying for different persons and in different social conditions, and no general rule can be made. The test of what is shameful is what is liable, in the particular circumstances of time, place and persons involved, to cause uncontrolled sexual activity, or what is an unwarranted and irreverent treatment of sex.

Shamelessness, the opposite of shame, is due to abandonment to sexual sin; though there is also another shamelessness (only partial in this life) due to the perfection of chastity and the absence of the reaction of fear of sin. There is also a relative shamelessness, due to the fact that what one person or race finds shameful, another does not, owing to diversity of upbringing and other circumstances.

Modesty in the modern sense is allied to shame, and is also an ally of chastity: it is the avoidance in dress, movement, etc., of what will arouse uncontrolled sex instincts. Modesty in the older sense—that mostly used by theologians and in official documents—is quite other: it is the accommodation of our dress and behaviour to current usages, without any direct reference to chastity.

The sense of modest fear, and reverence for sex, is thus a potent aid to chastity, eliminating those unnecessary stimuli to the sex instinct which naturally strengthen it and render it more difficult to control. It is necessary in acquiring chastity to pursue a double course: the normal and unavoidable everyday stimuli (which may be very great) must be so dominated by control that they cease to disturb deeply, while at the same time abnormal and avoidable stimuli must be eliminated until the virtue is strong enough to ignore them. The aim is some partial restoration of the integrity of our primaevial state, and a gradual diminution of the objects which arouse sex, and therefore shame.

SPIRITUAL BEAUTY

Another condition of chastity, the opposite of that which gives rise to shame, is an appreciation of its honourableness, decency, praiseworthiness and spiritual beauty (*honestas*). The spiritual beauty of human life consists in its illumination by the light of reason, and the exclusion of what clouds

its rational order and beauty, and degrades man to an animal level. It is this aspect of chastity which can be called purity in a natural sense: the appreciation of the value of the beauty of reason in all man's actions, and the avoidance of the abuse of sex as something which above all spoils that beauty. Such purity must be a real appreciation of spiritual beauty; not merely a temperamental shrinking from sex arising from sensitiveness, independence or dislike of violent excitement.

But there is a superior supernatural purity, based on the appreciation that man's spiritual beauty consists not merely in right reason, but in union of the mind with God. Such purity avoids all that impedes the union of man's mind with God; it is a purity of the type of the angels, not directly concerned with chastity, but with the realisation in man of a spiritual likeness to God by the subjection of the mind to him. Hence Christian purity does not primarily avoid the sensual, but directly seeks spiritual and supernatural beauty through the domination of reason, grace and God over the whole soul and all its thoughts and action. Chastity is one element necessarily found in it. Such purity will often negative possible dangers to chastity by perceiving the spiritual and God-given beauty of even materially impure things: this is the case in a truly pure art. On the other hand its absence, and the presence of a fundamentally impure attitude, can infect even things which externally seem impure, as again occurs in art.

Another condition of chastity, often spoken of by the Fathers in their sermons, is humility. Chastity requires the knowledge that submersion in the flesh and the loss of spiritual beauty is at any moment possible, and that its conservation is only the effect of God's grace. Pride destroys the proper beauty of purity, its relation to God, by perverting it to self; a chastity based on pride is fundamentally impure and spurious.

(To be concluded)

THE SONG OF LOVE

A COMMENTARY ON THE FIRST CHAPTER OF THE CANTICLE

LET him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.' How greatly must the soul feel the need of God's love if, without any provocation on his part or any preliminaries on hers, she breaks out intemperately into this appeal for love! What effrontery she has! What brazen boldness! That she entertains such desires interiorly or that she utters longings in private is not surprising; but to give public expression to her instinctive yearnings and in such outspoken terms is startling and embarrassing. Yet, without pausing to consider her lack of restraint, without reflecting on the suitability of time, place or words (for where there is love there is neither timidity nor shame), she openly and frankly cries out to be kissed. It seems as if she had lost all control over herself; as if convention, prudence, worldly wisdom were thrown to the winds and she were now left to the mercy of her natural impulses. She prefaces her request with no flattery or ingratiating remarks: she asks for no mercenary favour. Abruptly and without ceremony, from the abundance of her heart, she bursts out incontinently: 'Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth'. How imperative must be her craving for happiness, for union, for the embrace of love! Her whole nature seems to express itself in that cry. Apart from God she can find no rest. The rivers flow back to the sea: the catapulted stone falls back to the earth: the dove confronted with the flood returns to the Ark. The soul is irresistibly impelled to seek the tranquillity and peace in the embrace of God. Oh how strong is the power of love! How completely absorbing is her desire to be one with the Beloved!

These profound yearnings teach her intuitively what later experience, disillusionment, sorrow and disappointment tend to confirm: there is no contentment and permanent satisfaction to be found in any other. Let *him* and no other kiss me! She may seek to cool her ardour in the enjoyment of other loves; she may experiment with all that beauty and

power and honour can bestow; but, eventually, she will be forced to acknowledge that her thirst is not slaked, that her longings are not assuaged. If she cannot attain the bliss of God's embrace, then all else serves but to increase and inflame her desire.

I tempted all his servitors but to find
 My own betrayal in their constancy:
 In faith to him, their fickleness to me;
 Their traitorous trueness and their loyal deceit;
 Naught shelters thee who wilt not shelter me,
 Lo! naught contents thee, who contentest not me!

What the soul primarily and ultimately longs for is the *kiss* of the Beloved. She knows well that his glance is pleasing, his touch comforting, his words reassuring. She takes delight in his promises, feels secure in his protection. For all these favours she is not ungrateful. But what is all this compared to the thing she most desires? Let him *kiss* me! Nothing but the highest token of affection, nothing but the supreme embrace can satisfy her deepest needs.

Why then does she not hasten to his arms? Why must the initial step be taken by God? For she says: Let *him* kiss *me*. Because the soul can desire and ask, she can prepare herself by prayer and action; she can hope and wait; but she cannot kiss his mouth. She is able, like Magdalen, to kiss his foot in token of repentance; she can offer the kiss of peace and reconciliation. Like Peter she may kiss his hand as a sign of service and discipleship; she may offer homage. But the kiss of the mouth, whereby God breathes life and inspiration and perfect charity into the soul, cannot be attained by mere desire. She cannot of her own initiative, by her own powers, attain to God; nor can she meet him in the kiss of contemplation unless he first bend down and regard the humility of his handmaid. For God dwells in light inaccessible: no man hath seen him at any time. Between his infinite majesty and her creaturely lowness yawns an abyss she is unable to span.

It is, therefore, from a feeling of impotence, from a sense of modesty, that she addresses herself not to the Beloved but to his friends. She endeavours to ingratiate herself with them, and without mentioning his name, leads them to

understand that though she may not kiss, she does, at least, sincerely reverence and adore.

But if in her shyness she has opened her heart indirectly to the Beloved through intermediaries, she now turns suddenly to him and endeavours to excuse her temerity on the grounds of her trustful love. She says, as it were: If my desires, O Beloved, appear to be presumptuous, it is your benign generosity which has provoked them. My love and my confidence have taken so complete a possession of my faculties that I have become unconscious of your majesty and only conscious of your affection: *for thy love is better than wine.*

As his love is the need of the soul, so is it also the stir and joy of the heart. The pleasures of sense, like wine, bring intoxication and delight, comfort and refreshment. They warm the heart, renew the vigour of the body and fill the mind with exaltation. Man is exhilarated and enthralled by them and made oblivious of his true self; but their ecstasy lasts only for a time. The effect of such heady wine quickly evaporates, leaving him disconsolate and despondent, a prey to remorse of conscience. The enjoyment of God's love, on the contrary, is sweeter than any pleasure the world can offer. It leaves the sting of regret behind it, but rather enkindles a desire for deeper experience, floods the soul with a more pervading happiness and reinvigorates her with fortitude and endurance. No fleeting delight that earth can offer bears comparison with the abiding serenity and peace produced by divine love. How could it? The senses have but a limited capacity for joy. The eyes are gladdened with light: the ears with melody: the touch with warmth: the palate with sweetness. But if the light be too dazzling, the eyes are blinded and hurt; if the sound be thunderous, the ears are afflicted with deafness; if the heat be too ardent, the skin is burned; if the taste too pungent, the palate is disgusted and sickened. The spiritual faculties, on the other hand, are not numbed but quickened by their contact with the infinite. The memory becomes more conscious of eternity, the intellect becomes illumined with wisdom and the will becomes more and more transfigured by love. The enjoyment of the soul grows rather than lessens; and her sensi-

tivity to the raptures of the spirit is progressively heightened and refined. Never does the sweetness of divine love become cloying, never does it grow insipid. If at times it inebriates with the torrent of divine pleasures (Ps. 35, 9), the soul is not left with a deadened and sated appetite. He who drinks of this shall thirst again (John 4, 13).

How clearly the soul knows all this by intuition! But her purpose and determination are reinforced by reflecting on it, and she finds ever deeper and deeper reasons for clinging tenaciously to her fundamental convictions. That is why she adds:

Thine ointments have a sweet fragrance. She sees in divine love, as in an ointment compounded of various and precious ingredients, many constituent elements. God's love expresses itself not in infinite power only, but also in infinite truth and infinite goodness. He is her wisdom, her justice, her sanctification and her redemption. His love operates in a variety of modes. It enlightens and fosters, feeds and invigorates, moulds and transforms. It guides back the erring, directs the upright, supports the weak, encourages the strong, rewards the perfect and gives ultimate bliss to the saints. The sorrowful find in it comfort and solace, the depressed pluck from it renewed hope and strength. It is, in short, an ointment that heals, that soothes and that mitigates the pains of life.

And as perfumes not only gratify the sense of smell and awaken the emotions, but possess a remarkable power of reviving, by association, the memory of bygone scenes and distant friends and of re-creating affections connected with these persons and places, so God's love stirs the memory by the recollection of his past mercies, illuminates the understanding to see more clearly the significance of his all-pervading action and arouses the will to emulate and pursue what it feels to be so eminently desirable. How fragrant and delicious it is! How attractive it makes the soul who is bathed in it! It has a diffusive quality that pleases all who encounter it. Mere contact with a soul fragrant with divine love is sufficient to evoke a vibrant response to spiritual realities. Such love scatters its sweetness athwart the world, bringing hope and salvation and life to the weak as well as

to the strong, and affects even the remotest peoples.

And so beneficent is it in its effects that the mere mention of the name of the Beloved, who is its source, affords joy and consolation and encouragement. It is *as ointment poured out*: for it provides light and food and medicine. When it is preached, it enlightens the mind; when it is meditated on, it nourishes the soul; and when it is invoked, it softens and alleviates the wounds of soul and body.

Let St Bernard explain what it means: 'Is any of you sad? Let the name of Jesus come into your heart. Is any man falling into crime, or in his despair rushing upon death? Let him call upon that life-giving name: does he not speedily begin to breathe again and to revive? In the presence of that saving name, who has ever remained bound by hardness of heart, ignoble sloth, rancour of mind, or cold indifference? Who, when in fear and trembling in the midst of dangers, has called upon that name of Power, and has not found a calm assurance of safety and freedom from apprehension? Where is the man who, when labouring under doubt and uncertainty, has not had the clear shining of faith restored to him by the influence of the name of Jesus? Nothing is so powerful as the name of Jesus to restrain the impulse of anger, to repress pride, to cure the wound of envy, to bridle the impulse of fleshly desires. For when I utter the name of Jesus I set before my mind not only a man meek and humble in heart, moderate, pure, benign, merciful, and in short conspicuous for every saintly quality, but also in the same individual the Almighty God who restores me to health by his example and renders me strong by his assistance.'

How is it, then, that in spite of the fundamental need for God and his love, in spite of the soul's rapture in the possession of this love, and in spite of the tranquil happiness it diffuses wherever it is known, the desire for this love is not universal? The answer is to be found in the phrase that follows: *Therefore do the maidens love thee*. It is only the maidens, the pure in heart, who see God and are filled with desire for him. Those who are imbued with intellectual ambition, dazzled by worldly success or enervated by sensual appetites, are unable to conceive the worth, the relev-

ance, the utter necessity of divine love. Their eyes are held. They are shrouded in a web of their own fancies, desires, impulses and weaknesses. They are distracted by distraction unto distraction, torn asunder by a faction of warring fears and anxieties. How can they see God when they lack that single-mindedness which cuts through all entanglements? Because they fail to see, they fail to desire and love; because they are blind to God's beauty, they feel no attraction towards his love. They lie pinioned to the earth. The bonds that fetter them are made of gossamer, easily broken and thrown aside, but because they have no faith, they are without strength. For it is faith that digs the foundation of love. Faith is the knowledge that breeds desire. Faith sees things from the divine viewpoint: it gazes on the universe with the eyes of God: it looks out from the centre of eternity, so that everything in time falls and moves infallibly into its appointed place. Thus, divine love fills the forefront of the soul's vision and all else recedes into the void of immeasurable distance. But who have this penetrating gaze of faith? Who are imbued with this desire and this love? Only the maidens, the children at heart, the innocent. The self-seekers, the worldly wise, the complacent and the pharisaic 'seeing, see not' (Matt. 13, 13).



REVIEWS

A STUDY IN ST MARK. By Austin Farrer. (Dacre Press; 25s.)

The Church's children have for centuries venerated the Holy Scriptures, and they will do so to the end of time. But why do we call them 'holy'? Because through these Scriptures 'holy men of God spoke, borne along by the Holy Ghost' (2 Pet. 1, 21); because the Scriptures contain holy truths, and finally because they are a powerful means of generating holiness of life (St Thomas, *in Rom.* 1, lect. 2). The Scriptures are a library of books of different epochs, origins, authorship, literary build-up, language, etc. Yet all these books are one in that they are inspired scripture. Inspiration is the essence of scripture, the profoundly mysterious reason why these books are not as other books, even though to all outward appearances they may again and again appear as other books. Inspiration

is a mystery of faith, as mysterious as the doctrine of the most Holy Trinity or that of our Lord's presence in the Blessed Sacrament. The term or outcome of inspiration is a book, or part of a book, 'the very word of God given to the men under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost' (*Divino Afflante*).

The theologian approaches inspiration in a spirit of great faith, as he would consider other revealed truths, and strives first of all to have a true grasp of the revealed data on the subject, to get to know ever more perfectly what the Church has taught and sensed. Accordingly he will scan the Scriptures themselves (viewed as ancient documents), the utterances of the Fathers, the declarations of the Church. In this domain he will come upon much that is arresting and enlightening. He will note how St John Chrysostom, and St Augustine, compare scripture to a letter written from heaven; or again the human writer is compared to a harp or lyre, an instrument played upon by God . . . and so he continues, approximating more and more to the mind of the Church on the subject.

The next stage is to explore, as far as is humanly possible, the nature of inspiration, helping himself by what means he can. Thus he may consider in what sense God is an author; he may apply (as thomists will) the principles of instrumental causality to help to understand the dual authorship of the Sacred Books. But at the end of all this searching he will realise more and more that though inspiration is a social charism, or gratuitous gift of God, for the benefit of the Church generally or rather all humanity as destined to life eternal,¹ yet in itself it ever remains, in itself and in its permeating activity a transient impulse, profoundly hidden and mysterious, *of which the author himself*, more often than not, *need not be aware*.

But for Dr Farrer, St Mark was very much aware of his inspiration, and the fact that we can proceed at all is because 'we share St Mark's belief in St Mark's inspiration' (p. 8),² and further, Dr Farrer strives from the outset 'to grasp the process of St Mark's inspired thinking' (p. 9), 'for the control of the Spirit is visible and evident; it issues in precisely that shapening and patterning, that unfolding of symbol and doctrine, which the Gospel exhibits'. (p. 9.)

From these and like sentences we can only conclude that Dr Farrer is talking about something other than what we understand by inspiration.

For the rest, this 'Study in St Mark' is stimulating and refreshing, and an alert student could learn an immense amount from it just by following the argument and checking the references, text in hand. We are particu-

¹ societas . . . secundum quod ordinatur ad finem vitae aeternae non potest conservari nisi per justitiam fidei cuius est initium prophetia. . . . (*De Verit.* XII, 3, ad 11.)

² cf. p. 53: 'Some inspired writers are conscious of inspiration or even seek it; and the sacred writers of the New Testament age were mostly such men.'

larly grateful to Dr Farrer for rich typological suggestions, for an immense light thrown on the text in many places, and for treating St Mark as a unity.

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

REVELATIONS OF DIVINE LOVE. By Julian of Norwich. Edited and introduced by Dom Roger Hudlestane, o.s.b. (Orchard Series; Burns Oates; 16s.)

How can we reconcile the evil which follows from the abuse of the free will with the certainty of divine providence? This problem has fascinated philosophers in the past and it is today one of the most serious obstacles for many outside the Church in the acceptance of the Catholic faith. It is therefore most helpful to return to this great classic which shows such insight into this very question. It should be noticed that Mother Julian offers no easy solution, and unlike Origen, who conceived of suffering only as a purification leading towards a universal resurrection to glory at the end of history, she combines her firm faith in the providence of God with a recognition of the reality of eternal suffering in Hell.

She asks us to accept the thing in its true light as a mystery, which defies the capacity of the human reason to see in this life, but which must be accepted on faith without vision. 'The use of our reason', she writes, 'is now so blind, so low and so simple that we cannot know that high marvellous wisdom, the might and the goodness of the Blessed Trinity.' It is easy to dismiss this as a convenient way of avoiding a difficulty, but it is fundamental to the whole problem, and rests on the truth that our own conceptions of wisdom and justice can be applied to God only analogically. We inevitably reverse the true order of procedure and judge divine wisdom according to the faint reflection of it in our human intelligence, instead of understanding at the outset that our intelligence has the same kind of relation to divine wisdom as the human eye, in Dante's image, which sees clearly the depths of the sea from the shore, but further out can no longer see them. They are still there but are hidden from our sight. We try to judge the wisdom of God by what is only a created participation in his wisdom.

But once this necessary foundation is laid, Bl. Julian of Norwich gives us indications showing the direction towards which we should look for light. We are shown that the satisfaction made for the sin of Adam was more pleasing to God than that sin was harmful, and the conclusion follows: 'Since I have made well the most harm, then it is my will that thou know hereby that I shall make well all that is less'; it is the theme of the *felix culpa*. It is very significant, too, that she sees the unity between Adam and the whole human race. Adam is all mankind, and Christ, the second Adam, in taking flesh becomes all mankind.

The initial acceptance of the question as a mystery should not mean that we are not to try to use our reason to its utmost limits, and there is an interesting note at the end of the book giving a quotation from Fr Sharpe's work: 'Mysticism: its true nature and value'. He argues that if God had abstained from this creation on the grounds of his foresight of the sinful actions of his creatures, and had created another and better world, he would not have acted as God since he would have acted as dependent on the free actions of possible creatures. It is a pity that this most interesting reference contains the ambiguous sentence that the mystics are agreed that evil is the negation of good and no more, for it does not make clear the vital distinction between *negation* or limit which is common to all creation and *privation*, that absence of a perfection due to a thing, which is the foundation of our concept of evil.

DOM ODO BROOKE, O.S.B.

SHE TAKES THE VEIL. By Sister Mary Laurence, O.P. (Blackfriars; 2s. 6d.)

A dumpy, attractive little Dominican nun with a large red BY on her scapular invites the reader from the jacket to take the veil of the enclosed preacheresses. The first person to be enticed is Doreen, a young convert, business-girl of 25. She writes intelligent and undemonstrative letters to Sr Mary Laurence about becoming a nun and the latter gradually instructs her in matters that to an enclosed religious are straightforward enough but to the outsider are usually a complete conundrum. Nothing is shirked; 'Is there really pettiness or friction in the religious life?' Doreen asks. 'Of course there is', the good sister replies. No blinkers or rosy glasses here; and for that very reason the picture is attractive, as the life dedicated to the perfection of charity should be. Particularly attractive is the way the sacrifice of the vows is linked immediately with the sacrifice of the Mass. But every letter is wise and based on sound doctrine—'vocation itself is the acceptance by an Order for final profession'—nothing emotional or exalté here. The book will do a great deal to give people a true idea of the Dominican contemplative life, as well as of religious life in general. May it draw many another Doreen into the cloister to increase the work of the apostolate.

F.X.T.

MEDIAEVAL LATIN LYRICS. Edited and translated by Helen Waddell. (Penguin Books; 3s.)

This selection and translation appeared first in 1927; there followed three more editions before the war; and now Penguin Classics have given us its 350 pages for only 3s. The lyrics are all worth while, many of them full of the spirit of the tumblers. For the most part the translations

stand on their own as works of art. The religious lyrics in particular bring with them a taste of the Psalms and a smell of the country. One poem should be made the theme song of the liturgical revival, centred on the Easter Vigil:

Last night did Christ the Sun rise from the dark
The mystic harvest of the fields of God . . .

Miss Waddell's humble confession should not, however, be forgotten: "The greatest things in mediaeval Latin, its "living and victorious splendours", are not here because I cannot translate them." Yet she has recovered for us many very beautiful things.

THE SMALL MISSAL. (Burns and Oates; from 6s., the school edition, to 21s. de luxe binding.)

This Missal has already done more than any other to assist the ordinary Catholic or the neophyte of a convert to take his share in the regular Sunday Mass. It is presented again—inevitably more expensive than in its pre-war dress—entirely revised, with the Knox translation and with certain important additions. Its 398 pages, which make a compact pocket-sized book, contain all that is needed by the regular Catholic who assists at Mass on Sundays and on the important feasts. They include prayers for the sacraments and for Benediction as well as Compline for Sundays. Catholics will welcome its reappearance and look forward to the continuation of its good work of quietly leading people to enter more fully into the action of the Mass.

NOTICES

PRIESTLY BEATITUDES is the title of a retreat for priests written by a great German missioner, the late Father Max Kassiepe, O.M.I. (Herders; 37s. 6d.) and translated by a fellow religious. While we must welcome any book that will help the men dedicated to the altar to deepen their own faith, there are sections of this retreat which are almost embarrassingly practical. Priests, apparently, were encouraged to 'tell smutty, risqué stories' in clerical company in the eighteenth century; but Fr Max is happy to say that times have changed. They are to be prudent alike in drinking and in speech and retreat. There is, however, much positive assistance in the way of prayer.

FR A. D. FRENAY, O.P., takes us step by step through the Mass commenting on every prayer in **THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE MASS IN THE LIGHT OF THOMISTIC THEOLOGY** (Herders; 30s.). The commentary is intended also for priests so as to deepen their appreciation of what they do and say every morning. There are some liturgical assumptions, as 'The prayers of the Canon are not, as they may seem, independent prayers, each one separated

from the others: all . . . are related, . . . and form one organic whole'. But this quotation will show the synthetic, theological attitude that Fr Frenay adopts. Priests will derive much assistance from the book.

THE GOOD CONFESSOR, by Gerald Kelly, S.J. (Clonmore and Reynolds; 5s.), shows again that the priest today is not being neglected. The book is also written by an American, but its publication in Ireland makes it readier of access to the shelves of the clergy on this side of the Atlantic. The treatment is very practical as the author discusses such things as 'consultation' and how far one can use experience gained in the confessional for preaching and direction. The book will be bought by many confessors.

THE VEN. PETER DONDERS was a Dutch priest who went out to Suramin and Batavia in search of missionary work, lived heroically among the lepers, and at the age of fifty-seven became a Redemptorist. He died after a life of great energy and holiness at the age of seventy-eight in January, 1887. His life is told with spirit and attractively by John Carr, C.S.S.R., in *A Fisher of Men* (Clonmore and Reynolds; 9s. 6d.).

EXTRACTS

THE BLESSED SOLITUDE may well appeal to the greatly active and ever energetic French Catholics; so we are not surprised to find the October issue of *La Vie Spirituelle* devoted to the modern hermit. Is the call to a solitary life an evil sign—weakness, escapism, despair? Or is it perfection? Do we desire to fly to the desert under the impulse of the Spirit? Elias is the great figure of the solitary:

He is alone. The immense solitude of the desert which surrounds him is but an image of his isolation in his faith. His intense zeal has proved impotent. He knows that deep sense of frustration which so often pervades the heart of man. The most resounding triumphs come to nothing. Perhaps it is just here that we experience the most acute understanding of our interior wretchedness. . . . Miracles are not and cannot be holiness. If it please God to make use of us for his exterior works—without dragging in miracles, but limiting ourselves to the apostolate or to preaching—we rediscover ourselves in the dead weight that we are, acutely conscious of the vast disproportion between what God is and what we are.

But in that despair an angel appears and nourishes Elias with heavenly bread. Even so he must remain another forty days in the aridity of the desert on his way to the Holy Mount.

A footnote to another article recalls a past discussion in the pages of the **LIFE OF THE SPIRIT**:

Now that the constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* has recognised

canonically the ideal of the state of perfection lived in the very heart of worldly life now so profane, we may well hope to see the recognition *a fortiori* of this same ideal in the eremitical state, by an extension in the opposite direction . . . which seems to be needed to keep the supernatural balance. . . .

No suggestion here makes the possibility any nearer realisation. Last year, however, in two instructive articles on Secular Institutes, Fr Gumbinger, O.F.M.CAP., in the *Father Mathew Record* (Dublin; June and July, 1951) made it clear that the spirit of the solitary ought to be very close to the ideal of these groups:

Some members of these Institutes must live at times in common life; . . . This fact of common life, however, does not make such Institutes religious Congregations.

The negative problems of these consecrated souls find their solution not merely in prayer and detachment, but in that *spiritual autonomy* to which they must be trained. . . . The individual will also be helped to solve his problems by that *interior wealth* which he gradually accumulates. . . . Generally they (the Institutes) do not wish to be known as a society. Most of them publish nothing under the name of the Institute; they form no group activity in public; they forbid their members, as a rule, to speak to others about the Institute, its rules, houses, members and work. Even when the members live a community life they still manage to work in a hidden way . . . when they go about in the world, they are lost in the world.

All this has a delightful touch of the *ordinary* Christian life which of course every Institute and Order must live, and which always demands the spirit of the desert and solitude without its 'exclusivity'.

RELIGIOUS LIFE has been receiving much attention in America. *Cross and Crown* for September went to press too early to give much impression of the results of the first-year course of their Institute of Spiritual Theology except to quote the words of Cardinal Stritch who opened the Institute by celebrating Mass and preaching. Forty-five students began the three year course, coming from twelve religious institutes and many seminaries. *Review of Religious* for September gives the first hasty account of the National Congress of Religious held at the University of Notre Dame from August 9th to 12th.

The Congress was summoned by the Sacred Congregation of Religious, as a means of intensifying and strengthening the religious life in the United States, of giving religious of all institutes an opportunity to exchange ideas and particularly to discuss the problems pertaining to the adjustment of the religious life to conditions prevailing in our land without compromising the principles on which the religious life is based.

As so often happens in these Congresses, there were too many papers and little time for discussion, which latter is of the utmost importance. But a good start was made and we may look forward to similar gatherings in other English-speaking countries.

Meanwhile the same Congregation summoned a Congress of Superiors of Religious Sisters in Rome in the middle of September. At its conclusion the Holy Father spoke to them all:

As you know, the Orders of women are going through a serious crisis. We refer to the drop in the number of vocations. The crisis has not yet in fact affected every country; and even where it is felt it is not felt with equal intensity everywhere. But now in several European countries it is already disquieting. . . . We wish today only to speak to those—priests or laity, preachers, lecturers or writers—who no longer have a word of approval or praise for virginity vowed to Christ, who for some years, in spite of the Church's warning and contrary to her mind, give preference on principle to marriage over virginity, who present marriage as the only means capable of granting natural development and perfection to human personality.

The Holy Father regarded this reaction from religious to married life as the principal cause of the lack of vocations and the consequent abandonment of many great works of long standing in the matter of hospitals and schools. But he went on to speak of the necessity of adapting the life of sisters to modern standards in such matters as the religious habit, and of perfecting a more motherly spirit towards the sisters, who must also be properly trained for the work they are to undertake.

'Sad saints are no saints at all.'—Fr McAuliffe, S.J., in *Sponsa Regis* (August).

'The one natural life of man is supernaturalised, not by an external veneer, as it were, of grace but by an inward strengthening. The change may be regarded as a consecration, in so far as everything in man's nature is made sacred, as every part of the iron is made to glow with the fire in which it is plunged, or every part of the air is suffused with light.'

—Fr McNicholl, O.P., in *Doctrine and Life* (October).

LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

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